

HUMOUR IN THE CLASSROOM:  
STUDENT VIEWS OF A HUMOUROUS TEACHER

by

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## ABSTRACT

Teachers vary in their approach to humour in the classroom. Three possible approaches include the teacher who is serious and disciplined, the second who is humorous and encourages laughter, or finally the teacher who is humorous through sarcasm. In which scenario would students prefer to be a participant? Through an interview process, this study attempts to answer whether students prefer a humorous or non-humorous teacher. Three students were presented with scenarios describing the classroom of the three possible teaching approaches and were asked to identify which teacher they would prefer. The students also rated a list of teacher traits that included humour. All three stated a preference for the classroom of the humorous teacher, and a sense of humour ranked in the top five of all the lists. No student was comfortable with humour, though, without respect. The students agreed that when a classroom teacher uses humour in a respectful manner, the learning atmosphere is enhanced.

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## Introduction

Elementary, middle and secondary schools all have an atmosphere which is dedicated to learning through listening, watching, or interactive actions. Manuals for teachers offer strategies for everything from creating a learning atmosphere to maintaining discipline. When discussing the classroom, Holborn, Wideen and Andrews (1988) advise the novice teacher that “the most important fact for you to remember is that pupils themselves want teachers to develop and maintain order” (p. 16). The Professional Development Program (PDP) at Simon Fraser University uses a set of profiles (Wasserman & Eggert, 1994) to rank students as pre-service teachers in a pass/fail system. The ranking includes twenty behavioural profiles relating to classroom competence on the part of the pre-service teacher. Order, discipline and competence are all important in the classroom; yet the classroom is a microcosm of society, and there is more to society than these.

Humour is found in every society in the world; in fact, a popular saying is that we smile in all languages. The comic section of any newspaper is always the most turned-to pages of the paper (Wagner, 1994). Saturday morning cartoons on television have spread to weekday evenings. Cartoons are no longer just for children; in fact, many are definitely NOT for children, such as *The Simpsons* or *King of the Hill*. Comedy nights, sit-coms, late night talk shows; the list of where we find humour is seemingly endless. Humour is everywhere in society. Humour is a social activity, the school is a social body, and social learning, such as the curriculum of Career and Personal Planning, has become mandated in British Columbia.

The intent of this project is to investigate the opinions of students regarding the humorous teacher in the classroom. Do students prefer a teacher who is humorous, or non-



humourous? It can be expected that individual responses to humour will be as varied as each individual is; so too with the presentation of humour. People fall broadly into two categories – that of having or not having a good sense of humour. People with a good sense of humour are known as humourous, those without are not. The students form the community, but it is the teacher who sets the tone, and Hill (1993) reminds teachers that “in order to appreciate the group dynamics of laughter in the classroom, it must always be remembered that most classrooms are headed by adults who wield totalitarian power” (p. 41).

Martin and Baksh (1995) conducted an extensive study in Atlantic Canada about school humour and concluded that

classroom humour can be viewed as part of the process of the developing social order within the classroom, a process of self-development for students, a process of identity formation and identity maintenance for teachers, and a process of teaching and learning dimensions of life that are not set out in the formal curriculum. (p. 195)

It appears that humour does have a place in school; therefore, I will interview three students and ask their opinion on the use of humour by a teacher and their perception of the resulting effect in the classroom.

## Literature Review

### Definition of Humour

When speaking of humour, one must be clear what is being referred to as being humourous, for humour has many faces. As humans, we all laugh, but to actually define what makes us laugh is elusive. Hill (1988) has defined a sense of humour as “when a person perceives something as funny and derives pleasure from it” (p. 25), yet shies away

from defining funny. Holland (1982) personalizes laughter by stating that “we decide something is funny or not by whether we feel like laughing at it, even though we may not laugh out loud” (p. 15). There are many theories of laughter (Ziv, 1984; Bergler, 1956; Gruner, 1978; Holland, 1982), and for over one thousand years laughter has been studied by such researchers as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hobbes, Kant, Schopenhauer, Darwin, Freud and Bergson (Provine, 2000), but not one of them has truly defined what makes people laugh.

People may all laugh at different things, but the form that humour takes may be clearly categorized. Psychologists have identified four main forms of humour: verbal, figural, visual and auditory (Shade, 1996). All four of these forms are found in classrooms.

The humour most often used in the classroom is verbal, through jokes, wit, anecdotes, or sarcasm. Jokes tend to set the listener up for a punch line, such as the following:

Recently, a guy in Paris nearly got away with stealing several paintings from the Louvre. However, after planning the crime, breaking in, evading security, getting out and escaping with the goods, he was captured only two blocks away when his Econoline van ran out gas. When asked how he could mastermind such a crime and then make such an obvious error, he replied, “I had no Monet to buy Degas to make the Van Gogh” ([www.laughzone.com](http://www.laughzone.com)).

While jokes may be witty, wit tends to be delivered in a one-liner format, often at the expense of someone or something, such as “time is the best teacher; unfortunately it kills all its students!” Bergler (1956) defines wit as “laughter with the accent in intellectualism” (p. 67) and the most popular witticisms force interpretation upon the listener.

Anecdotes are funny stories with a basis in truism, and teachers may use an anecdotal format to share personal experience with their students as a way of sharing a bit of

themselves. I love the notes teachers collect, and wonder sometimes who must write them (is it actually the parent?), but there is little doubt about the one that reads “Dear Teacher; Bill wasn’t at school yesterday afternoon because he was at my funeral” (anonymous, cited in Lizé & Lizé, 1984).

Sarcasm makes fun of things or people in a destructive way. The teacher who uses a report card comment such as “your son is depriving some village of an idiot” is being sarcastic. Although sarcasm is funny, the delivery of humour through sarcasm defeats the purpose usually achieved by humour (Kher, Molstad & Donahue, 1999) because it relies on a target as the source of humour. If the target is a student sitting in the class, or is meaningful to a student, that student is then a victim.

There is a variety of books designed to help the teacher use more humour in the classroom. Loomans and Kolberg (1993), Stuben and Sanford (1998), Burgess (2000), and Berk (1998) have published books providing humorous lesson plans. A teacher with enough interest could practice and become a stand-up comedian in front of the class, although Hill (1993) warns the reader that “students want a teacher who has a sense of humour, but not necessarily someone who stands in front of the class telling jokes like a stand-up comic” (p. 46). Imagine the possibilities, though – a virtually captive audience and a place to test new material.

Some teachers will employ figural humour by displaying a cartoon. Bulletin boards are popular places for cartoons – collections from the newspaper or even those produced by students. Some teachers post marks on the classroom bulletin board, and may use figural humour to help reduce stress related to the grades. Consider the effectiveness of a cartoon depicting a student staggering to her teacher’s desk under a tower of papers, as the shocked

teacher exclaims, “Gracious, have we done that much writing?” (Jones, 1987) The presence of the cartoon makes a joke of the volume of work students complete for those marks.

Cartoon drawings may be in textbooks, and many a teacher has begun a lesson by first showing a cartoon to the class using the overhead projector. The simple inclusion of a cartoon helps to lessen tension around topics that may otherwise be depressing, threatening, or intimidating.

Visual humour is most easily included in class by having students engage in impressions or pantomime. This lets the students who like to clown be their funniest. There is no study I could find that suggests encouraging a class clown, but Hill (1993) does support this person by telling us that “the important social function of the clown is to see things in a humorous light, even things we are not supposed to laugh at” and continues on with that support by letting us know that even “Plato was very much the class clown, sometimes making fun of the bald spot on his teacher’s (Socrates) head” (p. 34). In my own experience, few teachers engage in presenting visual humour.

Least often used by teachers is auditory humour, particularly in the form of sound effects or noises. For an effective example of auditory humour, we can think back to classic television and the sound off-camera of the toilet flushing behind Archie Bunker. Students often quite enjoy auditory humour, though, in the form of “armpit noise” and other such sounds that are definitely not encouraged by teachers.

### Appreciation of Humour

There are four forms of humour, but we again bump into that sticky question of how do we decide if something is funny or not? Appreciation of humour depends on many factors, and in spite of E.B. White’s warning that interpreting humour is as futile as



explaining a spider's web in terms of geometry (Brown, Gibbs & Greg, 1990), I am going to attempt to shed some light on funniness.

First, the person delivering the humour must do so in a manner that the recipient can follow. Think about being told a joke by someone who feels compelled to explain the details of the joke as it progresses - by the time the punch line is reached there is more a sense of relief than of humour. There is also the joke teller who forgets the joke, and trickles off into unrelated tidbits trying to regain the gist of the joke but never actually remembers what it was. When looking at examples such as these, it quickly becomes obvious that the initial appreciation of humour hangs on the delivery.

The person receiving the humour must be cognitively able to appreciate it. The five-year-old will not think a joke about a politician is funny, nor will the average adult appreciate "knock-knock" jokes. As adults we can appreciate infantile humour in context, such as when the person is sharing it with a beloved child. Even then, though, adult laughter differs from that of a child. What's the difference between boogers and brussel sprouts? Adults and children will both laugh at the answer, "You can't get kids to eat brussel sprouts", but for different reasons and in different ways.

The humour must be appropriate to the recipient. Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, what is funny is the judgment of the audience. Cultural and racial slurs are always inappropriate. An informative, yet funny, demonstration of how damaging they can be is seen in a video by Wavelength (1999) entitled *The Seven Habits of Highly Ineffective Educators*. This cast has used farce to emphasize potentially destructive forces in the classroom in their fourth habit. Humour has the potential to be destructive. A person who feels laughed at is being attacked, and this attack can include the morals and values of a

person as well (Brown, Gibbs & Greg, 1990; Holland, 1982; Ormond, 1941; Ziv, 1988; Boerman-Cornell, 2000).

Jokes and teasing between friends often crosses the line between what is appropriate and not appropriate, but a good understanding of the recipient allows for some of this.

A Protestant minister and a Catholic priest enjoyed teasing their Rabbi friend, continually asking him when he was going to convert to Christianity. When the holidays rolled around, the Rabbi sent them the following card:

Season's Greetings!

Roses are reddish,

Violets are bluish;

When the Messiah comes,

You'll wish you were Jewish! ([www.laughzone.com](http://www.laughzone.com))

A joke such as this is one shared among friends, where each understands the sense of humour of the other and only appropriate between friends. A teacher must always keep in mind that he or she is not on the same level as a friend of students.

The exception for engaging in what would be deemed inappropriate is when one is a member of the group being targeted in the humour. We are permitted by society to laugh at ourselves, and our own cultural foibles. Ethnic comedians demonstrate this by developing entire routines based on their particular ethnic background.

The person delivering the humour must be sensitive to the recipient; be aware of whether some forms of humour offend the listener or whether a particular form of humour is appropriate for the setting. Humour can be used as a mask to offend others, and in this context, does not qualify as humour. Asking what the Green Bay Packers and the LAPD

(Los Angeles Police Department) have in common seems innocuous enough, unless a fan of either is given the answer that neither of them can stop a Bronco.

### Humour in the Classroom

There is little information to be found about the general effects of humour in the classroom. Martin and Baksh (1996) conducted a survey of twenty thousand students in the Maritime Provinces, which incidentally included humour as a component. In fact, it only appeared in the final item of the survey, where students were given an open invitation to say what they want about topics of their own choice. About nine hundred responses involved humour, which suggests that these students regard humour as important in the classroom. What those students said was significant enough to stir the researchers to a five-year observation study of humour in Atlantic Canada classrooms. The fact that students recognize humour in the classroom and place value on it, makes humour an aspect worthy of research.

In one fast-growing website, *RateMyProfessors.com*, students log on and, using three categories, provide information about certain professors. No suggestion is made of humour in the instructions for rating, but student comments often include it – “great guy ... terrible jokes!; a real jolly fellow; made the class fun; hilarious, makes class very interesting” (2/6/2002). Comments such as these demonstrate that humour, from the student’s perspective, is an important component of education.

Glasser (1986) has explored what it takes to be a “quality teacher,” and makes the connection between student and teacher to be so strong that “even if the student’s life away from the school is bleak and miserable, he will work if what he finds in school is satisfying” (p. 21). It is the teacher’s responsibility, however, to create a satisfying, quality environment

for students (Glasser, 1992). If students believe that humour is important in the classroom, then it is up to the teacher to include and monitor it in the classroom.

### Educational significance

There is an adage often heard in teacher training, “never smile until after Christmas”. The belief behind this is that “the teacher must learn to ‘control’ the class before relaxing” (Zinger, 1987). The control wielded by this unsmiling countenance is one of power and authority, rather than respect. The teacher who is relaxed and able to see and use humour in the classroom right from the beginning of the school year will develop with the students an atmosphere of mutual respect and learning (Martin & Baksh, 1996; Fleming, 1966). Power and authority does not breed respect; a respectful atmosphere does.

This study will consider humour as a means of engaging the student. The student who is positively engaged in the classroom society will develop a positive regard for the members of that society: the teacher, other students, and himself or herself. Humour delivers a message from teacher to student that the classroom situation is good and can also deliver a message from student to teacher that the classroom situation is good (Thomas, 1996). If a teacher is looking for a scaffold on which to begin a program for learning, then humour is an important block for building upon that atmosphere of learning.

### Method

A qualitative approach was taken for this study. The purpose for selecting this method is to describe and analyze individual thoughts, beliefs and perceptions (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). This research will describe and analyze the reactions of selected individuals to three classroom scenarios. It is understood that the opinions of the students participating in this study will be unique to each, and that these opinions will not be



representative of the students in a classroom. Opinions collected will be in relation to the use of humour by a teacher, an experience that is shared by all members of a student population but not necessarily interpreted in the same way. Therefore, although the perspective of the individual will be described, the social aspect of the situation is one that is shared by a larger group.

### Participants

Three students from grades eleven and twelve were interviewed. The students were selected based on the recommendation of their teacher or administrator as being cooperative and able to state a well-formed opinion. A cooperative participant is important in order to conduct a successful interview. A non-cooperative participant who refuses to answer questions is impossible to collect data from, when the collection method is by interview. The ability to state a well-formed opinion is important since opinion is what is being sought by this study. Academic performance was not considered as a factor in selection. As the interviewer, I had no prior knowledge of who these students were. The principal was given the choice of either two girls and one boy, or two boys and one girl.

This project was approved by the School District in which it took place (see Appendixes A & B), after which the school principal selected the three students. To do this, the principal contacted likely candidates and talked to them to find out if they were interested in participating. Only students who agreed to participate were considered as candidates for the study. Once an agreement was obtained, the principal forwarded the information (see Appendixes C & D) and consent papers (see Appendix E) to the student's guardian to obtain release of information about the student. With this release, I then made initial contact by telephone with the Kevin, Brittany and Amelia (names changed to protect anonymity).

The time and place of the interview was established by telephone and the interviews then took place. Three willing participants were found before any interview was held in order to eliminate the possibility of a student who has been interviewed discussing his or her experience with potential candidates. The three interview participants were not informed of the identity of the other two. At no time did any student receive compensation for his or her participation in this project. They each could choose to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Interviews took place in a neutral place, such as a coffee shop or the public library. Three locations were offered to each student, who was then given the opportunity to select the place that offered the highest degree of comfort for him or her. Each student was interviewed only once. Any further contact with that student regarding the interview questions was for clarification purposes only when transcribing the interview. Each interview was meant to take place within a two-hour time period.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews began with the introduction of a list of teacher traits as compiled by Reist (2000), (see Appendix F). This list was selected because the traits on the list are the same as those suggested by other authors (Stone, 1999; Orange, 2000), but the format is easily read and understood with all the language appropriate to the age of the students being interviewed. Kevin, Brittany and Amelia were asked to choose the top five traits important in a teacher, then rank those traits in the order of importance.

Each was then given descriptions of three different classroom teachers (see Appendix G). Three teaching styles were presented, one non-humorous, one humorous in a pleasant manner, and one humorous in a sarcastic manner. The three descriptions were written in

consultation with colleagues of mine, and with students who had no knowledge of the interviews. Through discussion, I attempted to capture what students think is a humorous teacher both in a positive and a negative way. Two students not involved in the study read the three descriptions and were in agreement that the non-humorous teacher is indeed serious and the other two are funny in different ways.

Opinions were collected through an interview that combines the interview guide approach with a standardized open-ended approach (Patton, 1994). An interview method of data collection was selected as it allows for a high rate of input into subjects that involve personal qualities (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). The question is whether students prefer a humorous or non-humorous teacher. The best way to answer that question is to ask the students. Basic questions were used in the same order, but flexibility was provided through the use of probes.

The three descriptions were presented together; interviewees were then asked about the three teachers and given the opportunity to offer opinions on them. By using pre-written descriptions, the risk of discussing individual teachers in the interview was eliminated, or at least reduced. The questions were designed to keep the interview away from specific examples involving individuals (see Appendix H). The questions are written in order to elicit opinion. Each student was interviewed separately and apart from one another at different times and dates.

The interviews were tape-recorded and notes were taken during the interview. A typed transcription of the interview was completed immediately following the interviews. When the transcription of each interview was complete, arrangements were made for the student to be given the transcribed notes of his or her interview, and was asked to review

them. Any change requested by the student was made at this time. A copy of the final project paper will be made available to each student.

Information from the three interviews was collated and analyzed following the guidelines set out by Patton (1988). All the student answers to each question were collected together, then specific references to topics were collected again separately. This is in keeping with Patton as he instructs “the evaluation analyst first pulls together all the data related to this issue, then subdivides that data into coherent categories, patterns, and themes” (p. 149). Although this sorting and re-sorting of data lends itself to a myriad of notes in margins and arrows throughout, the use of colour-coding themes helped sort ideas that the students presented. Positive and negative statements from the students are balanced against one another in an attempt to discover whether there is a more positive opinion for one type of teacher over another. Categorizing data by themes enables the researcher to find the unexpected and unanticipated results from interviews. Whenever a researcher gives a respondent the opportunity to comment freely, there arises the possibility of ideas the researcher initially was not looking for.

### Limitations

This study is limited to the interview of three students. Three was selected as a manageable number of interviews to conduct, considering the busy time of year for students in which these interviews took place, the difficulty of scheduling and conducting interviews, and the amount of data collected. The three students were carefully selected on the basis of their ability to clearly state an opinion. No criterion regarding gender of the students was placed on the selection procedure other than that there be a representative of each.



The interviews were conducted one-on-one, and were based on a common set of questions with probes, but probes did not occur consistently in each interview. Notes were made during each interview to clarify statements accompanied by hand gestures, hesitations and facial expressions not available through the tape recording.

### Data Analysis

Five broad themes emerged during the data collection and analysis phase, but two were most evident. The first is the connection between humour and respect. All the students interviewed emphasized the importance of this connection. The second was the role that humour plays in the classroom atmosphere. While the students had a more difficult time defining this role, the idea that humour is important in a classroom was presented over and over by the students. These two themes are explored in more detail during the analysis of the data. Other themes that arose were the role that humour plays in memory retention, humour as hurtful to others, and humour as a time-waster. A theme was defined as a topic expanded upon by two or more students, as opposed to arising directly from the questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### Interviews

I found the student interviews lively and interesting. Of the three students selected for this study, two were in grade eleven, one in grade twelve. Kevin looked forward to graduation and anticipated how university professors and classes might respond to humour. Brittany recalled stories about funny incidents in some of her classes. Amelia had a well-developed sense of humour, and tended to see herself as the class clown.

The decision was made to interview three students in order to keep the amount of research time and data collection to a reasonable level. By the time contact was made with

the students, they were in the year-end routine at school of final exams and graduation (for the Grade 12 student). Even though this is a typically busy and potentially stressful time for students, there was no trouble at all in setting up appointment times for interviews to take place. All the students were articulate but not voluble, so the interviews took less time than expected. Kevin expanded his answers the most, and his interview was about one hour long. Brittany and Amelia were less expansive; their interviews took thirty-five and forty-five minutes respectively. Two students chose a coffee shop as the setting for their interview, and one the public library.

The interviews took place on three consecutive days, and the students were each given a transcript of their interview within forty-eight hours to review and change if necessary. All the interviews followed the same format, beginning with a list of teacher traits for rating, reading three teacher scenarios and discussing them through a series of prepared questions. Prompts and probes were used to encourage the students to clarify their statements and further explain additional comments.

### Teacher Traits

The first thing students were asked to do was identify from the list the five teacher traits they thought were most important, rank those traits and support their decision. Kevin's five chosen traits in ranked order are: 1) be a learner yourself; 2) have a sense of humour; 3) impose limits; 4) respect your students and 5) be prepared. Brittany's five chosen traits in ranked order are: 1) respect your students; 2) be a learner yourself; 3) be prepared; 4) have a sense of humour and 5) be a role model. Amelia's five chosen traits in ranked order are: 1) respect your students; 2) be organized; 3) have a sense of humour; 4) impose limits and 5) be a role model.

Humour is important as a teacher trait, but for all of the students, it is not the most important trait. Yet, it ranked in the top five of all interviews (second, third and fourth). The only other teacher trait to make the top five of all the student's choices was respect. Other traits that ranked above humour were: being organized, being a learner (twice), and being prepared.

Ranking the top five teacher traits led to the selection of four traits that were all important to all the students. Respect, a sense of humour, being prepared (organized), and a teacher who is a learner himself were all top traits. The teacher as a learner himself, however, was always associated with the depth of the teacher's knowledge base instead of active learning on the part of the teacher. The students appear to want a teacher who has a good base of knowledge about the subject being taught. Kevin complained that "I have a couple of teachers myself that it really bothers me when they don't know what they are talking about." Amelia supported her choice by stating that "the teacher should have a strong background in all the subjects they teach."

The connection between respect and humour came through as the strongest theme in all the interviews. These two top-ranked traits seem to be related in the minds of all the students who made the connection when defining why they chose one teacher over another in the scenarios. Amelia felt that "teacher C [shows the highest level of respect] because he jokes around, yet knows things gotta stay in order." "Teacher C shows the highest respect. It's a fine line between making jokes and making insults" was Kevin's comment about connecting respect and humour. Brittany liked teacher C because "[he] takes the students into account with his jokes." At the very least, it seems you should not have humour without respect; however, you can have respect without humour. When asked about respect, Amelia

felt that “Teacher A [respects his students] because he sounds pretty strict but quite proper.” Humour without respect is commonly sarcasm, and none of the students thought that a teacher who is sarcastic is actually humourous. As Kevin said, “it’s a fine line between making jokes and making insults.” Brittany was emphatic when she stated that the teacher who “makes fun of the students, that’s just *not* fun” [italics used to show emphasis]. She continued by telling me that “I don’t like harsh words being bantered about. Just because!” Amelia initially thought that teacher B “seems to be okay” but continued her musing about him by saying “he sounds like he’s a little too much of a kid.” When she decided that he was the kind of teacher who uses sarcasm to be funny, she said “things aren’t always funny, and then everyone just feels dumb.” Insults are still considered humourous, or at least when delivered in a joking or teasing manner, but Brittany argued that “sarcasm is only funny to some people if they’re mean.”

Fleming (1966) supports the connection between humour and respect, as evidenced by a kind manner. “Equally the absence of an element of humour unless replaced by kindness cannot, I submit, have anything but a negative effect on the teacher pupil relationship. .... But, of course, kindness and humour usually go together.” (p. 7). When we are showing respect to others, we are kind in our interactions with them. In this way, we cannot insult them, demean them, or put them down. Unfortunately, the reality is that all too often, humour and kindness do not go together.

When asked which teacher of the three scenarios showed the most respect, all three students quickly and unequivocally named Teacher C. Brittany stated that “teacher C doesn’t like anything harmful;” Amelia liked that “teacher C would listen to the students;” and Kevin was direct when he stated that “teacher C doesn’t insult the students”. Teacher A followed



closely behind C in the choice of who shows respect for the girls, because even though he was not humourous, there was nothing to indicate that he insulted or otherwise psychologically injured his students. Amelia thought he was “proper, and that’s what his job is” whereas Brittany referred to him as “studious”. Kevin initially selected Teacher B as his second choice in showing respect to the students, then after reflection on the effects of sarcasm and insults, decided that “teacher A probably has equal respect to teacher B.” For Kevin, the descriptions of Teachers A and B reminded him strongly of people he knows, and there were personality issues relating to his choices. Overall, though, the students agreed that because Teacher B used sarcasm, he was not being respectful. Brittany focussed on the humour of teacher B being “barbed, that’s not good” and Amelia thought he would be so caught up in being funny himself that when it came time to listen to the students, “he’d listen but maybe not hear what they’re saying, just be listening and smiling away.” Kevin finally decided that “the difference lies with the person hearing the jokes” as being the factor which determines respect.

### Humour in the classroom

When a classroom is filled with humour, though, this class is the first choice for all the students. The preference was to be a student in Teacher C’s class for Brittany because “I like to joke around and things but I also like to get my work done” and for Amelia because “I like funny.” Kevin thought he would “marginally like to be in Teacher B’s class more but Teacher C would be good too. I like Teacher B more because it’s fun.”

Fun, funny, joking. Laughter reckons highly in a preferred classroom atmosphere. This second theme was also referred to regularly by the students on a spontaneous basis. The students shared anecdotes about their favourite teachers who created those memorable

moments when life in the classroom got funny. Brittany laughed as she talked about a math teacher whom she labelled as “eccentric”. The reason that teacher was memorable was because “[the teacher] would find funny things about really weird things and come up with weird examples.” Kevin stated that all his favourite teachers have made him laugh, “right from elementary school, all the best ones I can think of were doing all kinds of funny things.”

With an indicated preference to be in a classroom with a humourous teacher, the students were asked about the role of humour in the classroom. The main reason they all gave is that humour eases the atmosphere in the classroom. “I think it helps loosen the kids up, relax them a little bit,” was Kevin’s initial role for humour in the classroom. Amelia agreed, “It lets people kind of feel comfortable and at ease in the classroom so they’re openly expressing ideas and stuff.” Brittany, also, came up with the same role for humour when she said “It kind of eases the atmosphere and helps with gaining confidence.” Zinger (1987) supports all three of the students in his research, when he says that “humour can ease tension” (p. 35) in the classroom. The very act of laughing relaxes the body.

There was the suggestion that humour is most effective when deliberately introduced by the teacher in relation to an important test. Brittany defined the role of humour as “lightening the load if you have a really big exam coming up”. Amelia thinks if you crack a joke, then the students can “kinda get into a path of thinking a little better.” All saw the use of humour in the classroom as breaking the tension created by a stressful situation. This is supported by research done by Berk (2000) when he reported “the ratings collectively indicate that the students typically felt that the humour was effective in reducing their anxiety and helping them to perform their best on the exams” (p. 4). It is human nature to laugh in

times of extreme stress, so it naturally follows that students would want to lighten the atmosphere in a classroom when they feel pressure.

A second reason for introducing humour into the classroom is the suggestion that students remember things better when connected with humour. Brittany related an anecdote about a math teacher who used humour effectively in connection with concepts. "Like, we were doing a suspension bridge one day. So, she took a rope and put it from one door to the other door, and while someone was reading the question out and the different things that we had to find out, [the teacher] was running across the room and pointing out on the rope where they would be." Brittany believes those formulae are learned for life because of the connection to that bridge. Amelia likes to hang a concept on a joke to make the concept easier to remember, although she admits that sometimes the jokes teachers tell in order to make her remember things "are so dorky and corny, but it's probably just generation difference." Kevin is clear in his belief that with humour "you can remember things a lot better; I've noticed that." Martin and Baksh (1996) report several positive reasons for the use of humour in the classroom, helping to remember things being one of them.

The use of humour by teachers is viewed as having other potential benefits. It might help to stimulate or maintain student interest in the lesson. ... It might help make learning seem like fun: ... It might enhance student-teacher relationships: ... It might contribute to student enjoyment of what is being taught, perhaps even inducing a liking for the subject: ... It might also make learning an easier task. (p. 82-83)

While studies have been conducted to determine whether humour truly does influence memory, the results are inconclusive, although Berk (2000) found that the students still

support the use of humour. “The ratings collectively indicate that the students typically felt that the humour was effective in reducing their anxiety and helping them to perform their best on the exams” (p. 4).

Whether humour is being used in the classroom to ease the atmosphere or to enhance learning, the students all agreed that they want to be in a class with a teacher who has a good sense of humour and can laugh. They also agree that laughter is a powerful tool, and must be used carefully by the teacher. Kevin likes the insults thrown about by Teacher B of the scenarios, yet does not like to see people become a target of ridicule. Relating Teacher B to a real person, Kevin stated that “I like that kind of teacher. They’re funny. Some kids don’t, just because they’re a little rough with their insults, but I think if you can handle it; and as long as the teacher can handle being insulted back, then it’s fine.” Holland (1982) emphasizes the need for caution when using sarcasm because “laughter can substitute for an attack, because it both creates a bond among those who laugh at the same thing and draws a line against outsiders who either do not laugh or are laughed at.” (p. 92). The use of insults and sarcasm by the teacher must be carefully monitored in the classroom.

### The Humorous Teacher

Given the opportunity to comment on three different teaching styles, the students made some interesting observations. In speaking of Teacher A, the serious teacher, Kevin thought he was not realistic in his expectations because “no kids would sit quietly during his lecture.” Amelia thought this teacher must be older “because he’s used to stricter rules and stuff, whereas today our classes don’t seem to be like that so much.” Brittany connected the teachers to probable subjects, and decided that Teacher A would teach something studious



like social studies, although she agreed with the other two that “some students couldn’t even handle a really studious atmosphere where they’d have to sit quietly all the time.”

Teacher B, the sarcastic teacher, garnered criticism from the female students, and a kind of admiration from Kevin. Kevin’s inclination was to look at the repartee as an atmosphere where “you learn a lot of interesting facts about life”, and he thinks this is important because high school is “more of a learning how to learn than actual learning about the subject matter.” He was, however, very clear that he does not support put-downs or other targeting which could be interpreted as harmful. Brittany, continuing to connect the teacher to a subject, decided that Teacher B must teach something like an art class, which she perceives as having a more relaxed atmosphere because of the subject matter than something like physics. Amelia thought this teacher might be okay because he is funny, but continued on with “he’s a little bit too much of a kid.”

All three students admired the style of Teacher C, the easily funny teacher. Amelia immediately stated a desire to be in his class because “he just makes the class a good place to be.” Brittany felt that Teacher C “[took] the students into account. He knows that they might need some sort of thing to kind of calm them down...others can’t study with all the joking around.” Kevin thought that “he’s certainly a good teacher, someone who laughs.” The student’s opinions of these three teachers add weight to the conclusion that students prefer a humourous teacher. Their reasons vary, yet all three of the students unequivocally voice a preference for a humourous teacher.

Humour is a factor in building rapport in the classroom. Kevin thinks that Teacher B has the best rapport with his students, except the ones who struggle with taking a joke. Brittany and Amelia think Teacher C has the best rapport because “he doesn’t like anything

that's harmful to other students" (Brittany), and "he would listen to you and he'd probably give his opinion back" (Amelia). Rapport is important for teachers to build with students as part of the classroom atmosphere. As Berk (1998) has succinctly put it, "it is physically impossible to laugh and snore at the same time. Humour involves active learning" (p. 83). The connection between rapport, laughter and learning is very definite.

The students were not in agreement in their association of a teacher type with subject matter. Brittany immediately identified each style of teaching with a subject, as seen previously. She said "it depends on which type of subject the type of teacher you'd want;" whereas Kevin thought "they don't have to be in a specific subject to be like this." Amelia linked the teaching styles with subjects as Teacher A, English; Teacher B, PE and Teacher C, science. She could provide no specific reason for her choices.

Students in general tend to think of academic subjects as more serious and electives as somewhat more relaxed. Perhaps this seriousness is linked to the difficulty of the course material, such as calculus or physics, with which many students struggle. Porter (2000), a former college president returning to the classroom, endorses the view that humour has nothing to do with *what* you do and everything to do with *how* you do it, for he claims humour was helpful both as a teacher and a college administrator. Kher, Molstad and Donahue (1999) researched the use of humour in those university courses that students may avoid. Their conclusions support the premise that humour is not equated with subject matter.

### Cautions Regarding Humour

Students may prefer humour in the classroom, but all three found instances where humour is not helpful in the classroom; indeed it may be harmful at times. Amelia, adamantly opposed to put-downs, discussed the harm of sarcastic humour in class. She also

opposes targeting others, where it would be worst “in class where people are expressing their ideas, if you start laughing at them, then that just blows their self-esteem.” Brittany doesn’t like the idea of humour being introduced when trying to study for a big test because she thinks “that might cause students to get sidetracked.” Kevin’s opinion on when humour is not helpful in class is in “saying something about a kid who didn’t do well on a test and other put-downs.”

Sarcasm and putting people down is glorified in television shows such as *The Simpsons*, and people may use sarcasm in an effort to be witty. Yet, in listening to these students, a teacher would be well advised to be careful not only in the use of such humour, but in allowing comments such as these in the classroom.

Humour can also be over-used. When Martin and Baksh (1995) allowed students to comment on schools, they found that students want to see teachers use a combination of humour and more solemn strategies in their teaching. Brittany and Amelia reflect these findings. Amelia, in spite of her high spirits and good humour, is serious about her schoolwork and marks. She is frustrated in classes where there is too much humour, where “if you’re supposed to learn something and you keep joking around, you’re not going to learn anything and you’ll waste the whole class and then you’ll have to try and catch up later.” Brittany was more succinct, “You can’t laugh at everything, you have to have a balance.”

### Implications for Instruction

Respect for their students is the foremost thing the students in this study defined as what they want in a teacher. Yet, given the choice of three classrooms to be a student in, the three chose humour as the defining factor. Teachers need to be aware of the connection and balance between these two factors.

The responsibility lies on teachers to guide their students through a series of exercises designed to increase knowledge, in other words, to teach. Laughter can be interpreted as being the result of entertainment, not teaching. Teachers can use humour, though, in creating an atmosphere in the classroom where the students want to be. Desire is the first requirement to learning. "Laughter in the classroom is a sign that students are enjoying learning instead of resisting it as a dull effort demanded of them by adults" is how Hill (1988) explained the need for humour in the classroom. Berk (1998) was more succinct when he quoted that it is no mistake there is a connection between "aha and haha." (p. 83) All three students in this study commented on not wanting to be in classes without humour. For Brittany, it was a social studies class that she remembered, "I had a social studies class where there wasn't any humour in it. It was dry and it was dull. Now I don't want to take social studies again because I found it boring." Kevin compared students in a humourless classroom to machines. "It doesn't sound like they have a lot of fun, which I think is extremely important. If you're doing this, they're just going to be droning through it, working like machines and nothing goes in at all." Amelia sees herself as the funny one, and puts fun into everything she does, but did comment that "if your teacher's really serious, then I have to be really serious and it's not any fun."

Admittedly, entertaining students is not what teachers view as their primary goal. The classroom atmosphere, though, must be one in which the students can learn. The use of humour in a positive fashion, will contribute to a positive learning environment. The students have said that is the class they would most like to be in. Sarcasm and put-downs, although funny, do not build a positive atmosphere. All three students made statements regarding the potential destructive power this type of humour has. Brown and Gibbs (1990)



warn that “humour plays a volatile role in the classroom. When it is inappropriate or of low quality, it can do anything from merely wasting time to seriously isolating or mocking a student or teacher” (p. 46).

Responsibility lies on each individual teacher to explore and develop a personal style of humour. Humour can not be forced, but it can be learned. Look to some of the books provided for teachers mentioned earlier, offering samples of how to inject humour into the classroom. As a people, we prefer humour. It is therefore no surprise that students prefer the teacher with a good sense of humour.

### Further Study

In replicating this study, I would increase the number of students for interviewing and collect a broader sample of opinions. This would allow deeper exploration of the themes that emerge. The interviews were planned to take up to two hours, but even these carefully selected students did not need that long to state their opinions. The time allotted for interviews therefore allows for more to take place. The students were enthusiastic to participate, and I think that finding more participants would not be difficult.

An interesting study related to humour in the classroom might be the role of the student clowning in class. Everyone who has been a student knows a class clown, yet I have been unable to find research about clowning around in class. I would ask whether there is a link between acting out by certain students and moments of feeling stressed.

### Conclusions

The students interviewed prefer a humourous teacher. They like to share in laughter and want a classroom in which laughter is a component. A sense of humour in a teacher is not the most important trait that students look for in a teacher. Respect comes ahead of

humour every time, but students still want humour. When a classroom teacher uses humour in a respectful manner, the use of humour creates an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. Berk (1998) tells us that “it is physically impossible to laugh and snore at the same time. Humour involves active learning.” (p. 83). Students want to learn. They want to be in classroom and get knowledge about the big things in life. They want to learn how to learn.

The opinions put forward by the students in this study confirm that humour is not necessarily essential to a classroom, but it is definitely preferred. Wagner (1994) likens humour to spice.

Spices usually comprise the smallest portion in any meal preparation. By themselves, spices provide little nutritional benefit and they do not really satisfy hunger. Yet, add spices to your food and a bland, boring meal becomes tantalizing...mouth-watering...exciting. Even good meals become better with the addition of the right kind of spices. (p. 66)

The teachers who add spice to their lessons create moments that will be remembered for ever. One can never predict how each individual will react, but evidence bears out the idea that if it is connected with respect, humour is a useful tool in the classroom. The challenge is for each teacher to learn how to infuse humour into the classroom while maintaining a respectful learning atmosphere.

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APPENDIX A  
**Barbara Bardonnex**  
B2 – 389 Hill Street  
Quesnel, BC V2J 1S8  
(250) 992-9690

May 1, 2002

Mr. Ed Napier  
Superintendent  
Quesnel School District No. 28  
401 North Star Road  
Quesnel, BC V2J 5K2

Dear Mr. Napier:

I am undertaking a project to complete my Master's of Education degree with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). The purpose of my research is to collect the opinions of students about the use of humour in the classroom.

I will be interviewing three students in grade twelve. I will be taping the interviews as well as taking notes during the interviews. The students will be given a description of three teachers and will be asked to respond to the descriptions and give opinions on the teachers. Taped interviews will occur over a one to two-hour session. Interviews will be transcribed, word for word, and then the tapes will be destroyed. Only I will have access to the transcript. Students will then be given a copy of the transcript of his or her interview in order to add/change/delete any incomplete or incorrect information. Transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet my home. Any person or place names which arise from the interviews will be changed to ensure anonymity. The students will have access to a copy of the project after it is completed. Students have the right to withdraw without penalty from the project at any time.

I would like permission to interview students of Correlieu Secondary School. I will ask Mr. Monych to select students and obtain permission from them and their parents to participate in the study. Mr. Monych will be provided with letters of information and permission for the students and parents for distribution to the appropriate people and will need to contact me when the permission forms have been returned to the school.

I look forward to your approval and reply to this letter. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at the number above, or you can contact me at Maple Drive Junior Secondary at 747-2211. Thank you for your consideration and support in this project.

Yours truly,

Barbara Bardonnex



APPENDIX B  
*Barbara Bardonnex*  
B2 – 389 Hill Street  
Quesnel, BC V2J 1S8  
(250) 992-9690

June 10, 2002

Mr. Adrian Monych, principal  
Correliou Secondary School  
850 Anderson Drive  
Quesnel, BC V2J 1G8

Dear Mr. Monych:

I am undertaking a project to complete my Master's of Education degree with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). The purpose of my research is to study the attributes students feel teachers should have.

I will be interviewing students in grade eleven or twelve. I will tape the interviews as well as take notes during them. The students will be given three scenarios from a classroom and will be asked to respond to the scenarios and give opinions on the teachers. Taped interviews will occur over a one to two-hour session. Interviews will be transcribed, word for word, and then the tapes will be destroyed. Students will then be given a copy of the transcript to his or her interview in order to add/change/delete any incomplete or incorrect information. Transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet at my residence and only my supervisor will have access to them, if requested. Any person or place names which arise from the interviews will be changed to ensure anonymity. The students will have access to a copy of the final project. Students have the right to withdraw without penalty from the project at any time.

I would like permission to interview students of Correliou Secondary School. I am asking your help in referring students to me for this study. Once the students are referred to me, I will make initial contact with them by telephone. I am interested in interviewing three students from grades 11 or 12.

I need you to initiate contact with students who you believe will participate in the interview. I am interested particularly in interviewing students who are able to form and state opinions in a clear manner. After you have selected students, I ask you to forward the information letters and informed consent form to them and their parents/guardians. You will then need to collect back the consent forms and forward them to me along with the participant's names and telephone numbers.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at the number above, or you can contact me at Maple Drive Junior Secondary at 747-2211. Any complaints about this project can be directed to the Vice President of Research at UNBC at (250) 960-5820. Thank you for your consideration and support in this project.

Yours truly,

Barbara Bardonnex



## APPENDIX C

**Barbara Bardonnex**  
 B2 – 389 Hill Street  
 Quesnel, BC V2J 1S8  
 (250) 992-9690  
 bardonnb@sd28.bc.ca

June 10, 2002

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,  
 parent/guardian

I am a graduate student at the University of Northern British Columbia, and am undertaking a project to complete my Master's of Education degree. I am studying the attributes students feel teachers should have.

Your child has been selected by Mr. Monych to participate in this project based on his or her ability to state a well-formed opinion. A willingness to co-operate in this project is the other important factor in this selection.

I would like to interview your child in order to find out his or her opinion about teacher attributes. I have descriptions of three different teachers using three different teaching styles. Your child will be asked to read the three descriptions, then asked to comment on the teachers. The interview will take place in a public place, I am suggesting a coffee shop or the library, and the interview will be tape-recorded. Following the interview, the tape will be transcribed and destroyed. Your child will then be given a copy of the transcription in order to change/add/delete information. The completed transcripts will kept locked up at my home for five years, and only my supervisor will have access to them if requested.

Your child has already indicated a willingness to participate in this project, yet it is important to note that participation in no way reflects upon any aspect of schooling, and he or she is free to withdraw without penalty at any time. It is my hope that your child completes the interview, because I believe that in thinking about teachers and how they teach, there will be some possible insights gained about classroom atmosphere, and this heightened awareness can lead to enhanced learning.

The use of created scenarios eliminates the need to name individual teachers. If the name of any person should arise, it will not be used, and any circumstances that might identify that person will be changed. Your child will remain totally anonymous in providing opinions, without even age being indicated.

Once this project is completed, a final copy will be made available to you and your child. I will phone and let you know when it is complete, and will then mail you a copy if you wish it. If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at 992-9690, or

the project supervisor, Paul Madak, at (250) 960-6520. Please be advised that any complaints about this project can be directed to the Vice President of Research at UNBC at (250) 960-5820.

Your permission for your child to participate is greatly appreciated. By signing the accompanying consent form, you agree to allow your child to participate, and permit Mr. Monych to release your name and telephone number to me in order that I may set up an interview time with your child. I appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Barbara Bardonnex

APPENDIX D  
**Barbara Bardonnex**  
B2 – 389 Hill Street  
Quesnel, BC V2J 1S8  
(250) 992-9690  
bardonnb@sd28.bc.ca

June 10, 2002

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,  
student

I am undertaking a project to complete my Master's of Education degree with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). The purpose of my research is to study the attributes students feel teachers should have.

I will be interviewing three students in grade twelve. I will be taping the interviews as well as taking notes during them. You have been approached to participate because of your ability to express an opinion clearly and in a well-thought out manner. At the interview, you will be given descriptions of three teachers, and will be asked to respond to the descriptions and give opinions of the teachers. Taped interviews will last about one to two hours. The recorded tapes will be transcribed and destroyed. You will then be given a copy of the transcript to your interview in order to add/change/delete any incomplete or incorrect information. Transcripts will be stored locked up at my home and only my supervisor will have access to them if requested. Any person or place names that arise from the interview will be changed to ensure anonymity. You will have access to a copy of the project when it is complete. You do have the right to withdraw without penalty from the project at any time.

Should you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at 992-9690, or the project supervisor, Paul Madak, at (250) 960-6520. Please be advised that any complaints about this project can be directed to the Vice President of Research at UNBC at (250) 960-5820.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. By signing the accompanying consent form, you are agreeing to participate in taped interviews without payment of any kind.

Sincerely yours,

Barbara Bardonnex

## APPENDIX E INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Barbara Bardonnex: Humour in the Classroom  
project for Master's of Education degree at UNBC.

### To be completed by the research participant

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?	Yes	No
Have you read and received a copy of the attached information sheet?	Yes	No
Do you understand that the research interviews will be recorded?	Yes	No
Do you understand the transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet for five years and the tapes destroyed after being transcribed?	Yes	No
Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in participating in this study?	Yes	No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	Yes	No
Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time? You do not have to give a reason and your refusal or withdrawal will not affect any aspect of your education.	Yes	No
Is the issue of confidentiality clear to you?	Yes	No
Do you understand who will have access to the information you provide?	Yes	No

Return this completed form to Mr. Monych at Correlieu Secondary School.

I agree to take part in this study. Correlieu Secondary School has permission to release my name and telephone number to Barbara Bardonnex, in order that she may initiate contact and set an interview date.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX F

### 10 COMMANDMENTS FOR TEACHERS

#### 1. RESPECT YOUR STUDENTS

It all begins here. Without this, you cannot go anywhere. Students have a sixth sense about this one. You cannot fake respect. It is closely tied to respect for yourself.

#### 2. BE A LEARNER YOURSELF

Know your subject. Love your subject. Know what it is to find something difficult. Share your discoveries with your students. Be the guide on the side, not the sage on the stage.

#### 3. REMEMBER THE PARENTS

Your students are someone else's pride and joy. However dull they may seem to you, to two other people, at least, they are shining stars. See the precious babe in each one.

#### 4. BE ORGANIZED

Find the balance between structure and flow. Dedicate specific places and times to particular tasks so that things get accomplished. Be consistent.

#### 5. BE PREPARED

Nothing significant happens without preparation. Have a plan. Anticipate the unexpected. Even if the moment takes you somewhere else, the plan is your road map.

#### 6. HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOUR

Learn to laugh at human foibles, your own and those of your students. Life is full of absurdities. These are the cure for the sourpuss.

#### 7. KNOW YOUR LIMITS

You are not superhuman. You cannot be all things to all people. You are not perfect. Learn to say no to unreasonable demands and inappropriate behaviour.

#### 8. IMPOSE LIMITS

Give students the security of knowing where the lines are. The young sapling needs a supporting stick in the wind, but be careful that these limits don't become bars.

#### 9. BE A ROLE MODEL

Take teaching seriously. Have an inner life. Practise what you preach, or don't preach it. Don't be a buddy, be an adult. Give students something to aspire to.

#### 10. KNOW YOUR GOALS

About any task, ask yourself: Why am I doing this? What do I want to accomplish? Does it have any value? Is this about learning? How does it fit into the big picture?  
(Reist, 2000)



## APPENDIX G

Teacher A

Mr. X is a pleasant man. He has a wealth of knowledge about his subject matter, partly because he has been teaching the same subject for nearly thirty years. Students in his classes have learned that they need to sit quietly during his lectures and are expected to remain on task during work time. If something happens that the students consider funny, they smother their laughter, for Mr. X does not tolerate joking around of any sort, and promotes a studious atmosphere in his classroom. If asked a question, Mr. X will respond carefully and thoroughly, but refuses to respond to any question that he considers inappropriate.

Teacher B

Mr. Y is a pleasant man. He has a wealth of knowledge about his subject matter, partly because he has been teaching the same subject for nearly thirty years. Mr. Y considers himself somewhat of a comic and he laughs and jokes with his students, but the humour he aims is often barbed. Of course, some of the students think Mr. Y is funny, and they encourage him to engage in witticisms. His classes tend to be relaxed in format and students feel they have a forum for exploring various ideas. Some ideas relate to the subject, some do not, but this doesn't usually bother Mr. Y unless things get too far out of hand, in which case he cracks down with some sarcastic remark.

Teacher C

Mr. Z is a pleasant man. He has a wealth of knowledge about his subject matter, partly because he has been teaching the same subject for nearly thirty years. Mr. Z seems to be always relaxed, and smiles often. Students in Mr. Z's class have come to count on Mr. Z to provide them with a joke every day along with their lessons. He encourages creativity and lots of laughter, but frowns on anything that could be considered harmful to another person. Although students in Mr. Z's class think he has a good sense of humour, they know that he won't laugh at just anything.

## APPENDIX H

## INTERVIEW NOTES / QUESTIONS

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_

1. I have here an article entitled “10 Commandments for Teachers” (see appendix H). What I’d like you to do is read through the article and pick out what you think are the five most important commandments for teachers to remember, then tell me why you have chosen them.

Give sheet with three descriptions (appendix F). “Read these three descriptions of different classrooms.”

2. What is your opinion of these three descriptions?
3. Do you think one teacher has a better rapport with his students than the others?



7. What role do you think humour plays in a classroom?
8. In what classroom situations do you think humour might be helpful?
9. In what classroom situations do you think humour is not helpful?
10. Do you have any other comments or opinions about humour in the classroom?